

KIRK TYVELA, *The Dictator Dilemma: The United States and Paraguay in the Cold War*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019.

Tyvela has written an excellent, detailed history of U.S. relations with Paraguay during Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship from 1954 to 1989. Tyvela's study is a comprehensive one that utilizes a variety of sources and extensively plumbs both U.S. and available Paraguayan archives. His book wrestles with an important question in U.S. foreign policy, that of America's longstanding reliance on regional despots while still proclaiming its mission to protect and expand democracy around the world. This contradiction held special salience during the Cold War. Stroessner personified the type of strongman the United States favored in Latin America in this period: a reliable anti-Communist, pro-American to the extreme, and one who favored, in his rhetoric anyway, capitalist, free-market development. U.S. scholars have explored more infamous Western Hemisphere dictators such as Anastasio Somoza, Fulgencio Batista, and Rafael Trujillo as they were so integral to the U.S. Caribbean empire. Stroessner in faraway, underpopulated Paraguay has drawn less scrutiny, though he displayed all the classic characteristics of the pro-U.S. *caudillo*.

Dr. Tyvela takes the reader through a careful narrative of how Stroessner manipulated and seduced U.S. policymakers and much of his own population for three and a half decades through seven American presidential administrations—no mean feat as numerous dictators fell much quicker in this era. Demonstrating strong survivalist skills, Stroessner skirted the winds of change in Washington, building a consensus of support among U.S. hardline diplomats whom Tyvela calls *skeptics* versus *reformists*, those American officials who questioned an open-ended commitment to such a repressive and anti-democratic tyrant. Readers actually get two-books-for-the-price-of-one in this volume because it not only provides an incisive analysis of Stroessner's governance vis-à-vis the United States but also gives a very fine overview of U.S.-Latin American relations from the late 1940s through the Reagan era.

The author begins his monograph with the brutal murder of a Paraguayan dissident's seventeen-year-old son by Stroessner's security forces. This incident might appear marginal but is actually deeply revealing of the dark heart at the center of Stroessner's terror state. The general came to power in a 1954 coup and soon established an iron grip on his nation through his near total control of three key institutions: the army, the Colorado Party (the only legal one in Paraguay for most of these years), and all organs of national and local government. Stroessner declared a state of siege that banned most constitutional liberties for the majority of his rule. His consolidation of power came at a fortuitous moment for him in U.S.-Latin American relations when the Cold War was at its height,

the Eisenhower administration had just launched a coup that overthrew President Jacobo Arbenz's democratic government in Guatemala and hardliner Secretary John Foster Dulles held sway in the State Department. Immediate U.S. support for the general ensued as he crushed all leftist/Communist influence and aligned Paraguay closely with U.S. security imperatives. The radicalization and feared influence of the Cuban Revolution reinforced U.S. backing for Stroessner at the end of Eisenhower's tenure. The first doubts about allying with such an unsavory thug arose during John F. Kennedy's presidency when key advisors questioned the wisdom of propping up so many horrendous human rights abusers who helped foment revolution and anti-American nationalism. President Lyndon Johnson had fewer doubts and pursued strong interventionist containment in both Vietnam and Latin America. To cement LBJ's support, Stroessner sent Paraguayan troops to the 1965 U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic and even offered to deploy his soldiers to Vietnam to ensure Washington's embrace of his regime which rigged presidential elections on a regular basis, squelched press freedom, and murdered and tortured selected opponents. Ever desirous of more U.S. economic and military aid, Stroessner constantly exaggerated the Communist threat to his nation and on one occasion even considered creating a fake guerrilla group to ensure continued funding.

The first cracks in the United States' pro-Stroessner allegiance appeared ironically during the Nixon administration, normally supportive of right-wing reactionaries who provided the basis for the Nixon Doctrine by shouldering the anti-Communist load while the U.S. retreated from Vietnam and negotiated détente with the Soviets and Red Chinese. An extradition dispute over a local drug trafficker with connections to Stroessner's endemic corruption clashed with Nixon's creation of the Drug Enforcement Agency and his war on drugs. Cuts to U.S. aid followed, though the general rode out this crisis due in large part to Nixon and later President Ford's backing of military takeovers in Chile and Argentina. Operation Condor, in which Stroessner and his fellow Southern Cone dictators hunted down and murdered political dissenters at home and abroad, signaled the last highwater mark of support for such praetorian monsters. President Jimmy Carter's 1976 election confronted Stroessner with a true nightmare: the doctrine of human rights as a criterion for continued U.S. support. While Stroessner survived Carter's sharp criticism and thrilled to the election of hard right conservative Ronald Reagan a few years later, his days in office faced growing rebuke. In his second term, Reagan, to Stroessner's shock, moved toward rapprochement with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and the newly capitalist economy of Red China. Stroessner appeared the odd man out by the late 1980s as democratization swept the hemisphere and he fell suddenly to a military coup himself.

What does the thirty-five-year U.S. relationship with the *stronato* tell us according to the author? Principally, that anti-Communism and stability trumped the uncertainty of democratic reform for most U.S. policymakers during the Cold War. Few alternatives to the dictator appeared in a nation that lacked any strong democratic traditions and had a history of political instability. Tyvela's analysis also explores the common conflict between ambassadorial authorities often enamored of the local autocrat and Washington officials who took longer-term, more critical views. Paraguay was never really that important a country to U.S. policymakers compared to the regional powers of Brazil, Argentina, and even Chile. Stroessner lacked the geostrategic paramountcy of a Shah of Iran, the Saudi monarchy, or even General Torrijos in Panama. Indeed, one of the reasons he probably survived so long was that he operated beneath the radar of these more strategic and challenged allies. The lone shortcoming of Tyvela's outstanding work is its lack of more Paraguayan documents and voices. But this is understandable and explained in the introduction as many records in Paraguay's archives remain closed or missing and Stroessner effectively shut down all opposition press, terrifying opponents into silence. Despite this omission, Tyvela's work provides a finely contextualized analysis of an often overlooked but important figure in Latin America's Cold War. Students of history, political science, and U.S. foreign relations would do well to add this volume to their libraries.

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EDWARD BLUMENTHAL, *Exile and Nation-State Formation in Argentina and Chile, 1810-1862*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Exile in Latin American history is most often associated with the military dictatorships of the twentieth century. In this welcome new book, Edward Blumenthal sets out to show how central this experience was in the formation of two nations, Chile and Argentina, in the nineteenth century. The figure of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and his classic *Facundo* (1845) come immediately to mind, but the author goes far beyond this iconic *letrado* to cover a wide social and political spectrum of exiles circulating among the modern nations of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Peru. His aim is to show how exile, in fact, helped define the current borders. Exiles also used their time to establish the institutional foundations and the cultural identities of the modern South American republics upon returning to their home countries.